

Fluorescent Lamp Waste: Spotlight on the New Rule

A new rule from the Washington State Department of Ecology affects how businesses dispose of used fluorescent lamps.

Most fluorescent lamps are now considered a “Universal Waste” and must go to a lamp recycler or a permitted hazardous waste disposal company. Landfills and transfer stations will no longer accept hazardous fluorescent tubes from businesses.

Understanding the new rule will help your company prevent environmental contamination and worker exposure to hazards—and reduce liability and expense from both.



Why the new rule?

Fluorescent tubes and high intensity discharge (HID) lamps (such as high pressure sodium, metal halide and mercury vapor lamps) all contain mercury, which is toxic. When broken, compacted or disposed of in the wrong place, lamps may release mercury into the air, water or soil, posing a threat to human health and the environment. Lead is also a concern for many lamp models.

How should I handle lighting waste?

The best option is to send lamps to a qualified recycler that separates the glass, mercury and metal. See inside for a list of recyclers. Fluorescent tubes contain elemental mercury mixed with powder. Crushing tubes creates mercury vapor which is difficult to contain. Keeping lamps intact prevents mercury exposure. Crushing lamps on-site is also a fully regulated “treatment by generator” activity, subject to much more complex requirements than the Universal Waste rule.

Used Fluorescent Tubes

Most fluorescent tubes contain mercury and are now regulated as a federal and state Universal Waste. Universal Waste rules also apply to some other lamps such as compact fluorescent, high intensity discharge and neon.

In King County, hazardous fluorescent tubes from commercial generators must go to either a recycler or a permitted hazardous waste treatment, storage or disposal facility. Some low-mercury lamps may *not* designate as hazardous waste. In order to put these in the dumpster in King County, you need to obtain a written waste clearance. Call Public Health-Seattle & King County's Waste Characterization Program at 206-296-4633.

Lamp recyclers separate the tubes into their component materials—glass, metal, phosphor powder and mercury—so that these materials can be recycled or reused. Some companies that recycle used fluorescent tubes are listed below. Call for prices and specific information on services.

Lamp Recycling Facilities:

Allied Technology Group, CA	800-227-2840
Bethlehem Apparatus Co., PA	610-838-7034
Earth Protection Services, OR	503-620-2466
EcoLights, Seattle, WA	206-343-1247
Mercury Technologies, Int'l, CA	800-628-3675
Mercury Waste Solutions, MN	816-554-8080
NuLife Industries, Aldergrove, BC Canada	800-247-6724
Recyclights—West, NV	702-633-7900
Superior Special Services, AZ (local rep)	425-427-1825
	800-368-9095
Superior Special Services, MN	800-831-2852

Hazardous Waste Management Companies:

Some hazardous waste management companies collect used fluorescent tubes and ship them to a recycling facility or hazardous waste landfill. For a current list of area hazardous waste firms, visit: www.metrokc.gov/hazwaste/yb/.

Used Fluorescent Light Ballasts

Light ballasts are the electrical components at the end of fluorescent light fixtures under a metal overplate. The ballast has a small capacitor that may contain

Ballast Recycling Companies:

Earth Protection Services, Inc., OR	503-620-2466
EcoLights Northwest, Seattle	206-343-1247
Full Circle, Inc., CA	800-775-1516
Mercury Waste Solutions, MN	816-554-8080
Superior Special Services, AZ (local rep)	425-427-1825
	800-368-9095
Trans-Cycle Industries, AL	205-338-9997

polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a hazardous substance. Ballasts made before 1978 probably contain oil with PCBs.

Ballasts made after 1978 are

marked “Non-PCB.” Ballasts manufactured after 1978 may contain a PCB replacement called DEHP, a probable human carcinogen. Ballasts should never be disassembled for disposal. The best options for used ballasts are:

- ◆ **Non-leaking PCB ballasts:** Recycle them at a facility with EPA approval for recycling PCB ballasts. Use a firm with EPA interim or final status as a PCB commercial storer to transport them to the recycling facility. Non-leaking PCB ballasts that aren’t recycled should be managed and disposed as hazardous waste.
- ◆ **Leaking PCB ballasts:** These should be handled with extreme caution to avoid exposure, contamination and liability. Leaking PCB ballasts must be managed as PCB waste and disposed in a facility regulated under the federal Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). For more information, see www.epa.gov/r10earth/pcb.htm or call 1-202-554-1404 (National TSCA/PCB hotline).
- ◆ **Non-PCB ballasts:** The best option for non-PCB ballasts is recycling. For requirements to dispose of non-PCB ballasts in the garbage, call the Business Waste Line at 206-296-3976.

Listing of ballast & lamp companies does not imply endorsement by King County. This list of recycling firms is updated monthly at: www.metrokc.gov/hazwaste/ybl/.



Lamp recycling: How King County can help

The Local Hazardous Waste Management Program in King County assists “small quantity generator” (SQG) businesses with hazardous waste concerns, including lighting waste. As with all businesses, SQGs are required to recycle hazardous lamps or dispose of them as hazardous waste; SQGs face less complex handling and reporting requirements than larger generators. Program services include:

- ◆ **On-site consultations:** Technical staff visit business sites to answer waste management questions and help you comply with regulations, including the new lamp rule. Call 206-263-3090 to schedule a visit.
- ◆ **Voucher Incentive Program:** During a visit, qualified businesses can receive a voucher for 50 percent of the cost of managing hazardous waste, up to \$500. This includes recycling lamps and ballasts and disposing of PCB ballasts.
- ◆ **Property manager assistance:** We have assisted many property management firms, who often deal with used lamps, ballasts and other hazardous wastes. Call the King County Property Manager Assistance Project at 206-263-3059.

Other lighting resources for businesses include:

- ◆ *Seattle City Light:* Financial incentives for businesses upgrading to more efficient lighting. Call the Conservation Hotline at 206-684-3800.
- ◆ *Puget Sound Energy:* Financial incentives for businesses upgrading to more efficient lighting. Call the hotline at 1-800-562-1482.

Fluorescent lighting: Still a bright idea

Is fluorescent lighting still an economical and environmentally responsible choice? Yes! Using efficient fluorescent lighting saves energy, which is one way to reduce mercury emissions. Recycling used lamps is another way businesses can reduce liability and prevent contamination.



Local Hazardous Waste
Management Program
In King County, Washington

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This information is available on request in accessible formats for persons with disabilities by calling 206-263-3050 (voice) or 206-296-0100 (TTY).